THE CONFLICT IN CONSCIENCE OF A Dear Christian,

Named,

Bessie Clerkson,

In the Parish of *Lanerk*, which she lay under, three years and an half.

GLASGOW,

Printed by *Robert Sanders*, One of Her Majesties Printers. 1704.

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MINISTER.

BEssie, how are you?

Bessie. I find the wrath of an angry God, or a crabbed God. All the wrath you preached is come upon me now; I find him dayly coming against me.

M. Bessie, God will for good ends let his own dear Children taste of his anger, and wrestle with his wrath in this world, that they be not called up in a dead sleep of fleshly security, and so perish with the wicked of the world in that great wrath that is to be revealed, and to bring them to a hatred of sin and sorrow for it; and to teach them how far they are obliged to the Son of God, who hath for them undergone the full weight of that Wrath (for your trouble is but a spark of that fire wherewith Christ was burnt up in a Sacrifice to the Father) and that our heart being ranked with terror, we may be made for the greater peace and the calm after the tempest may be the sweeter when it comes, and Gods glory the greater and more manifest in that dealing and casting down and plunging in the hell, and heaving again to the heaven: and this sort of dealing drives Atheism best out of the heart.

B. I am not a Devil to contemn God, and I cannot get faith to believe in God.

M. It is a degree of faith, to find the want of faith: It is a step of greater growth.

When I was about to comfort her, she said, Will ye speak to me as ye should, and say, Thou wretched sinful and wicked woman: and not to me sweet words.

I answered her, No, Bessie, I must not me[et] [with]

sure you as you do your self. By your own sense; but to teach you to hope above hope, and say with Job LORD, if Thou wilt slay me yet will I trust in Thee.

B. O there was Grace there; but there is a great dissention betwixt GOD and me: I am cast away. O that this Wakening had come twenty Years since! but now my Time is lost. Many comes to the Word and Sacrament that knows not what they are doing. The morn when GODs People come to hear you, I cannot come; I am cast aside.

M. It is yet the Acceptable time, wherein the Lord may be found he is yet upon the throne of grace. Give no place to such suggestions of satan, and distrustfull Cogitations, arising of your Corruptions: and where you cannot come to the Word, that is not to be laid to your Charge. It is not an argument of Gods Anger when any by sickness or trouble is withholden who would fain be there; but seek you by prayer to God, who by his spirit will teach you inwardly, and supply the want of the Means by an inward working.

When I pressed to perswade her, that God in his own time would take her, I cannot find (said she.

M. Albeit ye feel it not pray that the LORD would remember Mercy with Truth, as the Prophet Hab. 3. 2. Mercy in Wrath (said she: O that is a strange word! O for absolution! O for a drop to cool my tormented Soul! O that I could win a step nearer Him!

M. Blessed are they that hunger and thirst, for they shall be satisfied. It is the LORD who is our sufficiency who works the Will and the Deed: It is He who wakens those Desires in you, and he will work the Work.

When I had said, the Lord dealt with her as both, to humble her. To humble me, said she.

and that I am: the Cat that sits there, is in a better Case than I am. I shall beat down this Carcass with beer bread & water: but that doth not the turn. When her servant Woman said you are a good Body, and began to Commend her, Cease, said she. I am but a Dog, & worse than a Dog: Gods wrath is on me for my invisible sins: And if I were away, there would be none but Christians on the Earth. I know Christ would go betwixt me and all my sins, but one: I will not lain it, not hide it; it is Despair.

M. You are very sensible of your unbelief, and God will make you also sensible of a lively Faith, ere all be done For a little while hath he forsaken you as he saith, Isa. 54. 7, 8, 9, 10. But with great Compassion will he gather you. For a moment in his anger hath he hid his Face from you. for a little Season: But with everlasting Mercy will he have Compassion on you. And 10, 11. O thou afflicted and tossed with Tempest.

B. Is it God that doth this to me? Can God spoil Himself? I had Faith & Prayer, now they are reft, cut and spoiled. Can God do it? Will God rob Himself? Will he take away the matter of his own Glory? I am ashamed to look any man in the face. I have lost the Favour of GOD and Man. O for a drop of Grace! O for as much Faith as a grain of mustard-seed!

M. It is the Lord that deals with you, but not to rob your Faith which is his gift, and once given, cometh never under provocation. Yet it continueth not ay in a like vigour and strength, but will oft come under a great Eclipse, and be brandled with doubtings, and shaken with fears, for there is no perfection here: and all this exercise is to add Strength, that the wrestling with God as Jacob did, may prevail in end: and that is not lost, your earnest desire evidently declareth. And when I shew her, that we walked by Faith and

and not by Feeling, and muſt not meaſure our ſelves, nor Gods goodneſs and love by our ſenſe. She anſwereth, if Faith doth it not, I have done with it. When one beſide ſpake to her of Gods favor & preſence, ſhe ſaid, God, if I were as ſure of it as you are. I have ſaid ſhe, hands feet, eyes, knees, I can do any thing but one, I cannot Believe: Well were the ſoul that ever it was ordained that had Faith. O the great want of Faith and Love to God in theſe dayes: It was never leſs, & they will find one day what it is to want it. One thing holds me from God it is Unbelief, Gods hand is ſore on me, I would fain Believe. Pray, pray, pray, (ſaid ſhe) ye that have Faith.

M. The Lord who will not break the bruiſed reed, nor quench the ſmoking flax, will bring your deſire, and theſe weak Beginnings to a greater growth and perfection for Faith growth by degrees, as that blind mans ſight Mark 8. . . .

When I told her of Gods dealing with his own by diverſe ſorts of trouble in mind, body, and eſtate, ſhe anſwereth, no trouble to the trouble in mind. I care not (ſaid ſhe) for legs arms eyes, and all the reſt if I could get comfort in the blood of Jeſus. I would not care my Carcaſs lay lame, leper, ſick, ſore, ſo that my Mind were pacified, and at one with GOD. I care not for all Satans aſſaults if he were even ſtanding there. In that I could find GOD with me and not againſt me. Wait on, ſaid I, the Lord would come. She anſwereth, he cometh daily in wrath. But he will come in Mercy, ſaid I, in his own time. She anſwereth, ever ſince this bred in me, you did that, but I can never find it: I would willingly loſe my Soul, if I could get Faith. Well the Soul that ever it was ordained of GOD, that gets the Comfort of the Holy Ghoſt!

M. Would you not, Beſſie, be one of His? Gladly, gladly, ſaid ſhe, to be one of His, to have

one.

one drop of Grace from His Finger-end. Who would not be one of His? Then said I, blessed are ye: for blessed are they that hunger & thirst for Righteousness, for they shall be satisfied. Blessed are they that seek in sincerity to be one of that Society of the Saints of God. To have the comfort of that Communion and Privilege of His People. For blessed Psal. 33. 12. are these People whose GOD is the LORD, even the People whom He hath chosen for his own Inheritance. And after I had prayed for her & prest by some passages of Scripture to comfort her, she said. it is heavy to my heart those Admonitions and Prayers, and to get no part of them in my Soul, and not to find Him whom you seek.

She saith again. Whether shall I turn? whether shall I go? what shall I do? whether shall I run to seek God to grip Him? I cannot get grips fastned on Him. Dear Minister, said she, tell me why sin hath procured this that I am such a spectacle to the World by all others I heard you read you, knew ye ever one like me? then I shew her of Job, Jeremie, David, Hezekiah, and others. And albeit, Elsie, to your feeling, ye cannot get grips fastned on Him, yet assuredly He hath grips fastned on you. The good Shepherd hath you in His Hand, and none shal pluck you out of it.

E. I think if ever I had Faith, I could not have lost it

Min. Your Desire which GOD reputes for Faith hath the same Promise of Satisfaction which Faith hath made unto it.

She answereth, I would be burnt quick to be sure of Salvation. I live without Faith. I live and worship not God. I can find no comfort from God nor man: my Life is miserable and comfortless. That is even Jobs complaint, said I Job 3, 20, 21. So albeit ye be comfortless to your sense

senke, yet you are not marrowless, and hath the Saints subject to the same tentation and tribulation with you; and ye shall get in the LORDs Mercy a blessed mit-gate with them: yea altho we be never witness to it, yet you your self shall feel it.

B. I am the most Miserable and Wretched Creature in the World, for my Sins are hid to my self, and known to GOD.

M. Beside, God is not ay pursuing sin, when the Souls of his Saints are perplexed & pursued with horrours: He seeth no iniquity in Jacob, nor sin in Israel: albeit it setteth us to seek them out, and to sorrow for them: He hath other ends wherefore he dealeth with his own namely that he may show his work, and glorifie his name, as Christ saith of the blind man John 9. 3. After I had prayed, said she if your prayers have a good ground, and be according to Gods will it is the better, it will be the better heard. But that is, said I, I have a warrand to mourn: and to pity and pray for all that are in trouble, chiefly of my own flock. Your warrand were the better, said he, if I were one of Christs flock. Happy is that Soul that is one of those, but ye are one of those, said I. Ye have ay said that, said she: but I can never find it. You will find it, said I, in the Lords time: tarry his leasure. it will come with comfort. Tarry must I said she where shall I flee or flit? he cometh ay in due time, but he cometh to me in wrath. When I remembred her of Job, who said, If thou wilt slay me, yet will I trust in thee. She answereth where will ye get a like of Job. No, not among you all that are Ministers. Faithful was he, but I have none: no salvation for me. Then to try her, I said, will you sell me your part of it, your right and Heaven? what shall I give you for it? If you will have, you may the better cheap quite it, and

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I will give you. She answereth, why scorn you me a silly poor Woman, and ye a Wise man. I would buy and not sell. If I had ten thousand millions of Gold, if I had a Thousand Worlds, if it were to be bought with Money, I would give you all for it.

M. I said not this to scorn you, Belsie, but to draw out your Desire by this Demand as it doth: whereby it is easie to discern, that ye have a sure Title to that Salvation, although it seem not to your self.

B. I have no pleasure in any thing neither in Husband, nor Child: I can do nothing but sin: my Life is all sin: and it were to peal the Bark off a kail-castock and eat; I sin in the doing of it: Why live I then. I cannot die, said she: I cannot live: they bury a Carcass: will they bury me a Carcass of Sin. yea Sin it self.

When I asked at her if she desired Mercy: she answered, O that His desire to me were as great as mine to Him: O for a look of Love I cry and pray, said I for the Lord hath said seek, & ye shall find knock, and it shall be opened unto you. My Prayer said she is repelled my Cry is not respected: it doth no good, I cannot have Faith, except GOD give it; None have any Grace, but from Him: Happy are they that can bless Him and call upon His Name.

M. And happy are they. Belsie, that counts them happy and would with all their Heart be of that number as ye would.

B. That Stone in the Wall hath as great appetite to any Bodily Comfort of Meat, Drink, Clothes, or such like, as I have: I cannot get Comforts of the Holy Spirit.

When I prayed for that Consolation to her that solid comfort which is stronger than tentation, tribulation or death it self: she said, why bate ye your prayers on such a vile Wretch: God hath

counted

counted the number, and gathered them, and I am one moe. I will not believe you said I Belsie, albeit ye believe the suggestions of Satan in your false heart. it is otherwise in the account of God: And I will pray for you, that it may be revealed to you, and pray you with me. And after I had prayed, she said sayings will not do it. you do your part but if God work not, and He give it not, I cannot have comfort. Can any have grace till God give it? Can that Stone believe? Yet, Belsie said I let us use the means, and do according to Gods direction in his Word, and wait on till He who hath wounded heal again, and He will make Light arise in the midst of your Darkness the Light of Consolation in the Darkness of Perturbation and calm the Tempest that is in your Conscience.

B. There is no friend to that Soul that is under GODs Feet; I am under GODs Feet, and my Husband. Children nor any other are Friends to me; nay nor my own self is a Friend to my self: as for my Corps, I care no. it were cast up to the Heaven and keeped upon Irongraps: so my Soul had Peace.

M. Belsie, many have Peace with themselves, that have none with God as secure sinners sleeping in Sin, and crying Peace; and some have Peace with God that have none with themselves: and as many have not the Grace and Faith which they think they have, so some have the Grace and Faith which they think they have not.

B. I care not for mine own Damnation, if GOD be Glorified; what reck of me. if He gets His own Glory.

M. Belsie, assure your self these are not the Wishes and Words of a Cast-away and GODs Glory be dear to you. you and your Salvation dear to Him.

Then I asked if she took Meat to refresh her Body

body? she answered, No, all craves that both faithful and unfaithful, albeit the unfaithful be unworthie of it, for they cannot glorifie that God that gives it.

When I desired her to pray, she answered, I have no warrand & have many lets, Will you say, said I God be merciful to me, for Jesus sake: she said, God be merciful to me for thy own sake, for Christ hath not redeemed all. Bessie said I, ye must seek in the Name of Jesus, whom the Father hath sealed, in whom alone he is reconciled with us, and for whose sake he giveth grace and mercie: lay your compt, you will never come to the Father but by him.

M. Bel. Do ye not pray when ye are alone? She answered, I will not commend my self. When one parting with her said God be with you, Bessie. She answered, God forbid he were with you, as he is with me. O there is a great change coming, a fearful alteration, a cup of wrath coming, we are conceived and born in sin, and what shall be the end of sin?

M. Indeed, Bessie, sin hath fearfull effects; but blessed be the Son of God Jesus, who saveth his people from their sin. There is no condemnation to them that are in Christ.

B. I know if the devil were chained there besides, he cannot, without GOD's permission, hurt an hair of mine head, but God being angry with me he turns him loose, and all his instruments against me.

M. Bessie, the Lord loosed him upon Job, but so many links only, that he wan to his goods, children, body, but not his life, far less to his soul. The Lord will not give the soul of his turtle to the beast, the good shepherd hath you in his hand, and none shall pluck you out of it. What ever be your fears, doubtings, or apprehensions under your trial, and present desertion.

When some standing by spake to her, she says take

take all that to your self that you say to me, ye have no borrows, no assurance more nor I, and knows not but ye come in the like case —

M. Indeed we should take our warning by you, and we have all matter to gather and lay up against the hour of Temptation. I coming to her saith Bessie, have ye gotten any comfort yet? She answered when God sends it, I will get it.

But seek ye it not, said I: she answereth what availeth words, when there is nothing within? When I was blessing the Lord, she doubled the word, and said Blessed be he, blessed be he O that I could glorifie, O that I could get grips fastned on him I see, Bessie, said I albeit you pray not, yet you praise and bless God. I cannot said she, bless him, he is blessed in himself and I never heard him blasphemed, but I was grieved at it. I had rather have heard the evil spirit named ten times then him once blasphemed. Fy on them that cannot bless and yet will blaspheme him.

When I earnestly prayed for her, she said why take ye pains on such a vile wretched creature? I would Bessie said I have God glorifying himself in a lost soul, and magnifying his mercy on you who is miserable. I, said she, that is right good, God grant it. God grant it. O there is little faith in the earth, and love is grown cold;

when I desired her to pray, and said long since, Bessie, ye would have prayed, why insist ye not? She answered, I had the will of prayer, but who hath the spirit of prayer God knows well is the soul that is in Christ: but they that are founded on that old Father Adam, fearful is their estate.

When I was posing her with some questions about her inward estate she said Why examine ye me so sore, ye use sharp examination, and yet ye will not be my judge. Bessie said I, I would know your constitution, that I may the better know how to deal with you: I am about to instruct

strut and comfort you, to use the means, and beg a Blessing from GOD upon them; and I have seen when ye were better content that I conferred with you, and prayed for you. She answered, It is a token that I get small comfort by them. The Lord said I believe hath that to give, he hath not concredited the dispensation of a dram weight of grace to man or angel. he keepeth that in his own hand & dispenses when, and to whom, and after what measure and manner he pleases. But I see the devil in your corruption; is not content the means be used She answered, I find the devil, the world and the flesh fighting against me: I feel both Satans assaults and ly under Gods wrath also, which is a fearfull Case: what reck of all Satans assaults if I lay not under Gods wrath.

M. The greater battle, Belsie, the greater victory: I see great conflict in you, & you your self feels it, as you confess: yet happy are ye who are pursued by Satan, and not possest by him, and under peace with him. The Lord [illegible] betwixt you and him, and drawn you to that side whereon the seed of the woman is: I find faith fighting in you against unbelief, and where faith and unbelief are in one Soul fighting, faith shall ever prevail. By faith is our victory, John [illegible]. And what is the condition of the Christian ever after his calling, but to feel his troublesome conflict between nature and grace, spirit and flesh, the old man and the new? But blessed be GOD, who shall tread Satan under feet: so albeit this Battle be burdensome, yet let this bear you up, that the Lord in end shal give you the victory over all your Enemies. It were, said she, a great comfort to me if I were perswaded of it: but I cannot be quite of infidelity and despair. Well is the soul that ever it came into the world that can be freed of Unbelief, and grace to believe. Lord, banish the Devil, and I shall Believe. And some

Gentlemen

Gentlemen and others being with me she directs her speech to them, saying. Ye Gentlemen and Simple and all let my casting back be your forward coming. Well are ye that can believe and pray; but I have none. I have no Wit in the world either to bless GOD or to benefit myself. Many thousands get Grace and Faith, and I would as fain have it as any of them.

M. Bessie, God measureth his own by their unfained desire; and what you would be in an hearty affection, that ye are in the compt of God and that secret seed of Grace which in this exercise under the ashes of your corruption lyeth hid, and dead as it were, like seed in the ground, or hot coals under ashes, shall hereafter in the mercy of God bud and break forth; for it may be discerned already in these divine desires in your estimation of the blessedness of those that believe & affection to be one of that number. Bessie, is there any comfort come yet? She answereth, if it were come, it would kyth, it would bud forth. Oft and many a time have you said comfort was a coming, but I cannot find it. Alas! I am an out-law to God; I weep in the Night when I should sleep; I mourn when others are merry. I am bound when they are free; I have a lonesome lair a fearfull sore lair here, when others go up and down, to and fro: I am a Wonder to the World and I am worthy to be so.

M. Bessie, long delay is not an argument of utter denyal; and when ye mourn, when others are merry, it is better to go to the house of mourning than of feasting. Blessed are they that mourn (saith Christ) but wo to them that laugh. We are here in the Valley of tears and Kingdom of patience. The Lord will wipe the tears from your eyes; he is leading you by Hell to Heaven, and through many Tribulations and Afflictions to his Kingdom. Peace shal be the end of your Battles

tles, and reft the end of your trouble. We have, Beſſie, brought you a drink of wine to comfort your ſpirit. Wine (ſaid ſhe) the worſt water in the well is over good for me. I will have no wines; why ſhould I have the benefit when it is neither bleſſed to me, neither can I bleſs him that gives it? I care not for outward bodily comforts ſince I cannot get the inward and ſpiritual. Will ye ſeek it of God, (Beſſie) in the name of Jeſus. Lord, if thou wilt (ſaid ſhe) the Lord hath power enough: but not finding faith in Jeſus ſhe ſaid, ſhe wanted a warrand to ſeek it in his name. I will ſhow you a warrand (Beſſie) his own command with a promiſe, Pſ. 50. 15. In the day of thy trouble, &c. 1 Joh. 2. 23. This is his commandment, that we believe, &c. Alſo he calleth Mat. 11. 28. on the weary and laden, promiſing to eaſe them; you cannot deny but you are both weary and laden under the load, therefore you are called on: & the more miſerable you are you are a meeter object for mercy to work on. Will ye fly from the Savior, becauſe you are loſt? or from the Phyſician becauſe your are ſick? Alace (ſaid ſhe) I cannot find a warrand, I find a wrong warrand. What call you a wrong warrand ſaid I? I cannot find Chriſt (ſaid ſhe) and any thing beſide him is wrong

M. But ſay, Jeſus, intercede for me. I will not blaſpheme him (ſaid ſhe) nor be a liar: I am a liar great enough already: for to me to ſpeak the words in my mouth without faith in my heart, what is is that but to take his name in vain?

M. Shal I pray for you, Beſſie? What good (ſaid ſhe) can I get by your prayers except I had a heart to pray my ſelf. I have many things to ſeek if I could get faith to believe, and relief to my ſpirit, and what matter of laws then? when I ſee that I law not, then ſhal I do that I did not. Theſe three years I had not a faithful ne-

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sire: indeed I thought it came all from your own mouth, all the inlack of my prayers.

M. How so Belsie? what heard you me say? That prayer availed not said she. M. I have oft complained of our Prayers, as I had just cause, and that God might be angry against them, Psal. 81. 9. And might repell them, if he dealt in justice with us: But this was not to make us leave off prayer, but to repent, and pray more fervently. But the time hath been when you delighted in prayer, said I. She answered, I found comfort then in prayer, I had no comfort but in prayer: I had many calamities, and to whom should I seek but to God? And oft went I to him with a grieved heart: Had I God, what reck of all the world? what reck who be against them, if he be with them? But if a soul be under Gods feet, what availeth friends, kin, jewels and all the world? Oh, and alace for ever, that I should want that blessing and favour that he bestows on so many! alace, I have gotten the poor mans answer you will not be served.

M. Take not that answer, Belsie, continue crying and knocking, for he hath said, seek, and you shall find. And to the poor woman of Canaan that would not take a repulse or nay-say, was satisfied in end. But I am none of this side, said she. Belsie, said I, who told you that? the devil would have you think so: and will you take his testimony against you, who is a liar from the beginning and not the witness of the verity and word of God with you? Believe not Satan, nor your own false heart: I know God in his own time will give you comfort.

B. The knowledge is yours, said she, but the sorrow is mine. Well is the soul that getteth the holy spirit to seek grace and mercy at his hands. Well is ȳ soul that getteth the benefit & blessing of it: but fie on them that counts the sore afore the

sicke,

ey the fore of the earth before the glory of heaven. It is no fore to them, but a fearful curse. Alace, I have long to live and a wretched life: I weary up and I weary down, sighs help not, sobs help not, groans help not and prayer is faint. It is a fearful calamity to have two here and two hereafter to have hell here, and hell hereafter for ever. The matter is the less, they that get a light life and a lightsome life, that many have. But it is most woful and doleful to have two here and two hereafter for ever. I will tell you my testament, I have been in hell these many years, and I look never for another heaven. O wretch that I am! alace, for ever, there is a great flie coming, a fearful cup, and I will get my share of it: and it is nothing I feel here, to that I feel for ever.

M. Belsie, the Lord corrects you here, that you perish not with the world for ever. He woundeth, and he will heal again, albeit you can neither think it, nor feel it, nor hope for it; yet in his name I will assure you, in his own time, he will ease you, and speak peace to you, I cannot (said she) find you a good spay-man.

M. Yet if ever, Belsie I speak true, you will find it: I promise you in the name of the Lord, she answered, the Lords Lieutenant will be loath to lie, well is his Lieutenant. Whom call you, said I, his Lieutenant? you, said she and such as you; Ye are tennants, and not masters. Belsie, grip to the promise of mercy, hope above hope. I have not, said she, that gift of my self, if God give it me not. Seek it of God, said I, What reck of words, said she, since I cannot get mends to my inward parts; I am sure, said I, if you should go to hell, Belsie, you would go to hell with love to God. She answered, what reck of my love to him since he hath none to me: if he had love to me, all were well. But he loves you, Belsie, before you loved him, for your love

is the effect of his, and they whom he loveth can never perish. His own, said she shall never perish. But ye are one of those Belsie and hath right to the promise. She answered how shall I believe you who believes not him who hath all power, and is truth it self? I would fain seek God. But I feel my sloth and sees and my prayers are dung back. If any had but four and twenty hours yea a touch of that, under which I have lyen these three years, they would think their case fearfull, and would give a world (if they had it) for a blink of his reconciled face. But my Calamity will make others run and cry for mercy. my grief and displeasure is your joy and gladnels. How so, Belsie, we take no pleasure in your grief. She answered, A Christian that is sealed, seeing not, will flee to mercy as a bird. but I want wings. After I had prayed for her she said, if God would give me a heart to give you thanks for your good prayers, I would give it. And if I had a motion in the right way of salvation, O as I should run and flee to him like a bird! God be blessed, said I, I see some fore-running token of his coming with comfort. She answered they are but sober and smal tokens. Your words (said I) smell sometimes of the spirit of grace and faith and sometimes of the flesh, infidelity, and infirmity; for the prayers of the Saints are oft like a fire, which at the first hath smoke and reek, without light or heat, but breaketh out ere all be done into a clear light and comfortable heat; As may be seen in sundry of Davids Psalms where he begins with heavy plaints, and endeth in heavenly raises and prayers ere all be done.

At another time I asked if any comfort was yet come? she answered, Dolor was come, but no comfort. You are troubled with me in pulpit, and out in pulpit, and in coming unto me day after day; will you make you quite of this cumber, Belsie, said I, I think no cumber of it, it

is the duty of my calling. and would God you got comfort by it. But how shall I free my self of it? she answered. cut me off. And wherefore, said I, would ye have me, or any, taking your blood upon us, and sin on our souls. Nay, no sin, said she, for there is good cause. What cause? said I, What have you done deserving death? is not unbelief, said she, the greatest sin in the world, and I am guilty of it. We have, said I, no warrand for that: Again, you are not void of faith however, in your wrestling with unbelief, you think so, and you would fain believe, and be freed of unbelief, that you might say with the Apostle. it is not you, but sin in you, You are a sufferer in this against your will, you are spiritually oppressed & groans to God under this bondage. Then she uttereth these words, O that I could get this fountain of faith, a stern of it; O as grace would grow; O for a blessed blink of the favourable face of the Father of the faithful; O to win to that holy Fountain; I know he is ready to give. if I were ready to receive and seek. Glory pertaineth to him, and glorified shal he be. I pray you, Belsie, seek on, and glorifie him by invalling of his name: Pray him in Jesus name to be merciful to you and help your unbelief. I can (said she) name Jesus, but he will not be pleased with words, except I had a warrand of faith in my heart to seek by. M. Yet will you say the words; I think there is none but you, but they will do this much for me. Many speak them (said she) with little faith but I dare not that I draw not down his punishments.

M. Belsie, he will never be angry that you pray him to glorifie himself in giving you an heart to believe in him. I have great lets, said she.

M. But pray him to take them away. Then you said he, that he to do while now? M. But continue and let me hear you, and be a witnes

it: Do this for my pleasure, it were my own pleasure and good (said she) if I could do it rightly, it were my own well: But God hath a work to work with me, that you never saw the like of it. Besse, pray God in Jesus, that it may be a work of Mercy, to His Glory and your Salvation. She answered, I will tell you my Mind, Jesus is a just one without exception, not like the false flesh of this generation. He will lose none of His own; and though they fall fearfully, He will raise them again; but those that He bids not of, He gives them no Grace to seek Him, whereof I am one, I can name Him, and speak any words as you hear; my Mouth should be opened to seek, if my Heart were opened to believe, but it is closed, I may mourn for it but I cannot mend it; but, LORD, mend it; LORD, mend it. Seek (said I) for Christs Sake. I want Faith (said she) I know the sin of man is not so great, but GODs Mercy is greater to forgive it, where they can repent and believe. But I have not this Grace of my self, if GOD give it not. Pray that ye may be preserved from the Peril and Plague that is to come on me. Well are them that are grounded on CHRIST, well are them that are Brethren and Sisters to Him! O that I were one of them! O that those that are come out of my Loins would seek to Him, and bless Him! O that the Grace-giver would give me Grace to believe, and give him glory, and I would bless Him and give Him thanks & praise, and honour and glory for ever! O that I could get an Heart to give Him thanks for any thing He sends. Why should not I be content with His Will? O that I could welcome His send how bitter soever, and reverence the Sender? What reck of me, if He get His own Glory? but alas! I have many Wants, many Woes, Unthankfulness, Unchance, no Weals: I am sorely shaken, a sore shake of Wrath is come on my soul.

M. he shakes you (Belsie) to make you sure, if it were so (said she) I would seek to him. The Temtation (said I) dings you from that you desire, and you are greatly wounded in your spiritual battle but what reck of a wound to him that getteth the victory, you will in the Lords mercy get the victory what reck of your wounds then: And we will sit down on our knees, and crave it to you of God in the name of Jesus. After I had prayed (she saith) God, for thy beloved son Jesus sake see to my misser, succor me. Now ye are witnes to that, that ye would have had that I seek in Jesus Name. Blessed be God for it is said, Seek on &. I will pledge my soul for yours, that ye shall be safe. Seek must I (said she) and seek will I though he should ding me back to the bottom of the sea: and charge the whole family that they do the like as you do to me: for come well, come wo they will get a share of it: I will (said I.) for they ought to concur with you.

The next time that I visited her, and demanded how she did: She answered, the life of the body is not like to go out, and comfort is not like to come into the sout. Yet wait, Belsie, in hope, and give not over, it will come. I know (said she) your tales and tidings but cannot find them true: Alace, that ever I came into the world, I am not booked. I am not baptized, I am not written in the book of life I am not baptized in the right baptism. I cannot find the fruit of it.

M. Belsie said I, I am sorry that I find you not as I left you. Continued you not calling on God in Christs name as you promised? She answered I was the worse of the words that you muled me to say; I am ever since a thousand times more troubled then before Belsie the words have not the wite it is Satan that rageth before he be call out; & your trouble y nearer the night, the nearer is the delivery: And although your physick be bitter, yet it will have good effect. No

trouble is so joyous or pleasant for the present, &c, Heb. 12. the Lord who will not let the hand of the wicked ly long upon the back of the righteous. Psal. 125. 3. will not let his own hand, which is heavier then the hand of the wicked ly long, he will send the issue with the tentation, 1 Cor. 10. 13. Wherefore hearken not Betsie to Satans suggestions. that your heart be not bound up that you pray not. That is (said she) a true tale, Satan binds up my heart. But pray (said I) against it: Say the Lords prayer. I can (said she) say the words, but I have no warrand to pray it. I cannot call him Father: He is the Father of the faithfull alone: but that priviledge of Children is not given me: I cannot find a warrand that I am his: alace, that ever I was the cursed ground whereon the ill seed was sown. M. Betsie, the more miserable you find your self the more meet are you to go to the Saviour for mercy. I am not, said she, worthy that he give me any grace or mercy.

M. Betsie none is worthy: and if he gave to the worthy his glory and praise would be the less: but in this is his mercy magnified, that he manifesteth it on the miserable: and this is a fault in us that we are ever seeking something in our selves which would derogat from the praise of his grace as presumption and desperation are dangerous rocks that many run on: and this is a third & as dangerous as any of them and the rather, that it is not soon seen or taken up. we are ay seeking something in our selves that should commend us to God as if we could not be saved except we were perfect as if our own innocency, & not Gods mercy in Christs merits were ý warrand of our salvation.

B. I cannot speak the word can please you, none of them that came out of my bowels: how then can it please the Lord? Mine own hand and Satan tells me not believe, and my unbelief dealeth

down

down all the ill of the world. and you book me & carries my name in many airts, but I cannot mend it. M. Bessie, nothing to your prejudice carrie I your name: for why should not the saints know of your estate? I pray you, tell me, said she how the people think of me, whether they be blyth or wo? I will assure you, Bessie, Gods People mourns with you, and bears a part of your burden: as for my self, I have five children sick of the fever, God who knows my heart is my witness, that I would not so fain have them raised up in their bodies as you comforted in spirit. You know your warrand said she.

M. I look to that: I seek mercy. But, said she, if I had spiritual grace, and could, I would give you a reward. Will ever that day dawn that God will draw me a wandring sheep home to himself? M. Bessie, in Gods mercy, I am assured of it. The God, said she, who made heaven and earth, who hath all power, grant it in mercy: Well is them for ever finds his favor but wo to them that feels his feed: and I hope, it would mitigate my sorrow. Bessie, said I, the Lord who by a secret grace underprops had sustains you now, will in his own time, by a sensible grace, and by his felt presence, abundantly comfort your soul, in such sort, that the weight & grievousness of the temptation and trouble. and delay of time, shal be recompensed with unspeakable joy: that you your self shal confess the one light, in regard of the other, not to be worthy of it: as by the contrary he recompenseth the delay of judgement toward the wicked wth the heavier weight of wrath. Happy said she, are they who suffer for Christs sake, for righteousness sake, they will be comforted now and then: but they that suffer for sin, without sense of his favour, comfortless is their condition. Will one go through the earth, up and down to and fro, where will they find a wearied weigh-

ll they come to me: And you that hear me, to
e pith of prayer ẏ I can, ask of God that you
ever know the way that I am in: it is lack of
ith that is my loss: want of faith is my wrack.
lay under fearful weights and wanteth faith
get the remission of them. I am fallen without
relurrection, My judge is my partie. I have no
aim to his mercie I have no ground of faith to
sten grips on him. I find not a spark of light &
find no fruit of your prayers albeit I hear them.
No Christian should come near me.

M. Bessie the Lord will oft, for good causes,
elert his dearest Saints, and withdraw himself
om their sight and sense of their humiliation
nd instruction (that they count not grace natu-
al) for their greater consolation when he cometh
gain, and for your provocation: follow after him
hen he withdraweth his grace, & yet it is not a
eal, but a supposed delertion: wherefore seek
is sensible presence, and break through all im-
ediments of terrors, blindness and unbelief; or
hat else thrimble through all, and he shal come
aping over the mountains of your sins & hills
f wrath, with the voice of heavenly consolation.

B. Shall I seek hot water under cold yce? I
ave not come in the precise and blessed hour of
race. I am com behind; and where you will me
pray. wherefore serves the prayer that glorifieth
ot God?

M. Bessie, it is yet the acceptable time: and
e who is found of them that seek him not, will
uch more reveal himself to him that seeketh.
nd as for prayer, by it you greatly glorifie God:
you acknowledge your miserie and necessitie,
nd that he is God; who not only knows your
iserie and necessitie but is both willing and ab'e
help the same: and we have not only his com-
and to pray, but also his promise to be heard.

B. Then all break his commands, & chiefly I,

and

and so will be seen on the whole Work.

After this, when I had read some comfortable places to her and prayed for her, she cryed out and doubled it oft, O blessed are they that have that spirit of prayer! O blessed are they.

NOw as for the end of this conflict, and death of this dear daughter of Abraham in April 1624. I being at Glasgow at the Provincial Assemblie, the Lord called her home, she being greatly extenuat and worn what by heavie sickness on her bodie, what by this longsome and fearful exercise on her soul, death on a suddantie seaz'd with her heart, that her words and speech failed her: but in presence of diverse witnesses her hands and eyes were heaved to the heavens: and so giving that sign of victorie, she rendred her spirit. And although it pleased our gracious God, who in his great wisdom worketh after diverse sorts with his own, to let us hear out of her own mouth of the glorious victorie, and unspeakable joyes that he had given her inwardlie in her soul: Yet I am sure there is none that is illuminate from above, and taught to discern spiritually, that will any wise doubt of her blessed deliverance, albeit no outward sign had been seen. Yea, it was a wonderful mercie, that God so long under such horrors hid her own hand out of her sight: which at last pitch her eyes she lifted up to the heavens, when her speech could not express her inward feeling of that unspeakable joy, and victorious faith.

Duly herein we have our warning to be wise in time, and to get oyl in our lamps, and not please our selves with emptie Lamps, and with a bare shew of an outward profession: but labor to have a livelie and effectual faith in the depth of our soules: for conceit of opinion will serve sufficient till we be put at, which will not do our turn nor stand us in stead in the fierie trial.

FINIS.